



Webinar Questions and Answers

Creating Healthy School Indoor Environments in Tribal Communities: Best Practices from Tribal Programs

Answers provided by: Johna Boulafentis, Environmental Outreach Specialist, Nez Perce Tribe's ERWM Air Quality Program, and Scott Weir, Air Quality Coordinator, Kickapoo Tribe of Kansas

Q: Did you use any carbon dioxide monitoring equipment?

A: No. We did not have any such equipment. It's truly a consideration because the use of a carbon dioxide monitor will tell you if you have problems, and that can be an issue, particularly in classrooms. If you have between 10 and 30 people in a classroom, and they're in that room for hours, there can be a lot of build-up of CO₂ in the room, especially if the air exchange rate is inadequate.

So it's a good idea to monitor for CO₂, but we just didn't have access to a monitor.

Q: Can EPA cite data on improvements on attendance and test scores with better IAQ?

A: Check our EPA's guidance on the importance of indoor air quality as a component of a healthy school environment here: <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/benefits.html>

See evidence from scientific literature here:

http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/student_performance/evidence.html

Q: Have you dealt with any opposition (for example, during walkthroughs) on the importance of IAQ from school staff, maintenance, etc.?

A: Initially, the maintenance supervisor seemed a little nervous about the program because he felt responsible for the upkeep of the building. But when he walked around with us, and understood our easy-going approach and we reminded him that we're here to help, he felt more relaxed. He was also new to the school district so that might have been contributing to his nervousness. During the walkthroughs, his comfort grew, and he could see how easy it was for him to improve maintenance around the schools.

Q: In New York, post Hurricane Sandy damp sheetrock was removed rather than dried. Is there a concern about mold growth on the backside of the sheetrock and the wall studs?

A: There is a big difference between a couple inches of water in the basement, as we experienced, and the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy. We were able to dry our sheetrock fairly well, and in a short time period.

However, for actual flooding and extensive water damage, such as caused by Hurricane Sandy, replacement is a given. When damage goes beyond a certain square footage and there's potential for growth of mold inside the walls, you definitely need to take sheetrock down; basically gut the building and start over.

Q: "Strong Integrated Pest Management" is one of the six technical solutions in the IAQ Tool for Schools guidance. How much did you consider pests and pest management in your programs?

A: Johna: We hope to work with the school district on this topic as well. There is an Indian Health Service employee in Spokane, WA, who reaches out to EPA Region 10 Tribes on IPM. Last year, we partnered with this employee during Healthy Homes/IAQ classes at our Housing Authority.

Scott: It was discussed in the training presentation the first day, and IPM was emphasized during the walkthroughs. We especially checked for potential points of entry for pests, and carefully examined the school cafeteria kitchen (no major pest issues were evident) and discussed IPM with kitchen staff.

Q: Are the presentations to housing authority residents required or optional? If optional, how do you encourage people to attend?

A: Scott: These trainings are optional. The community has an interest, but they are also encouraged to attend by the offer of a free breakfast (such as breakfast pizza, coffee, orange juice, etc.). We try to create a pleasant, informal, almost party-like atmosphere.

Johna: The trainings are optional here as well. Housing is a great partner because they provide food and door prizes. Classes held during the workday lunch hour are well attended. Our most popular class is "Green Cleaning" where participants make non-toxic cleaners to take home. Our last class in October had 30 participants.

Q: Do you have suggestions on where to get posters about the importance of IAQ and simple tips for maintaining IAQ in schools?

A: Check out these websites for more resources:

- EPA's IAQ Tribal Partners Program: <http://www.epa.gov/iaqtribal/index.html>

- EPA's Directory of Tribal Champions:
<http://www.epa.gov/iaqtribal/directory.html>
- Northern Arizona University's Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionals:
<http://www4.nau.edu/itep/>

Another approach is to get the students to design posters and put them up around the school.